

Purpose and Description

Second Chance Reading (SCR)

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The goal of Second Chance Reading (SCR) is the remediation of reading deficits for secondary students who otherwise would struggle with the demands of the secondary curriculum.

SCR focuses on comprehension skills but also targets vocabulary development and fluency in both fiction and non-fiction textual materials. The course is designed specifically for middle and high school students who are reading below grade level.

The program incorporates several strands:

1. Extensive independent reading at students' recreational level;
2. Vocabulary development at both age-appropriate and recreational reading levels;
3. Comprehension instruction for both lower- and higher-order comprehension tasks in fiction and non-fiction materials;
4. Fluency instruction and monitoring; and
5. Writing as an assist to comprehension.

Based on a comprehensive analysis of research on reading, SCR combines multiple strategies and practices into a structure for reading instruction and has proved successful in both urban and rural settings.

Course Elements

Teacher Think Aloud/Read Aloud

The "Teacher Think Aloud/Read Aloud" is developed around reading selections chosen because they are of high interest and relevance to students and because they are intellectually complex. The teacher models his/her own thinking while posing student to student pairs to practice the teacher modeled comprehension activity. Accompanying the Think Aloud/Read Aloud are a vocabulary lesson and one comprehension activity that addresses higher-order comprehension objectives.

Numbered Heads Together

Numbered Heads Together is a cooperative Learning strategy in which partners study the meaning of new vocabulary by building associations with the new words and then collaborate to respond to questions about the new words in a teacher-led recitation.

Cooperative Comprehension

Following the teacher Think Aloud/Read Aloud students work in pairs or small groups to discuss and record responses to comprehension questions. Generally, cooperative comprehension tasks pose three to five questions of graduated difficulty.

Dictated Writing

This is a teacher-facilitated writing activity that addresses a higher-order comprehension question. Students work with a partner to write to prompts provided by the teacher; the teacher then combines student writing into a class essay.

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Inductive Thinking

This fundamental higher-order thinking strategy is used to teach students a process for determining authors' central themes and main ideas. Students compare and contrast passages from a piece, categorize the passages by common meaning, and form generalizations about their categories.

Graphic Organizers

A graphic organizer is a visual representation of concepts, knowledge, or information that can incorporate both text and pictures. Examples include link-word mnemonics, maps, Venn diagrams, and flow charts. Graphic organizers allow the mind "to see" undiscovered patterns and relationships.

Independent Reading/Vocabulary

Students read silently books they have selected at their recreational reading level and record on index cards words that are new or unknown to them. Definitions of words are recorded on the backs of the cards. Each student maintains a personal file of words that they have identified as new. In addition, words introduced by the teacher each week during the read aloud/think aloud are part of students vocabulary file. The heart of every Second Chance Reading classroom is the SCR classroom library.

Fluency/Comprehension Tests

On a biweekly basis, students are administered a fluency and comprehension test. Results of these tests are plotted by each student. The goal is for each student to learn to monitor the speed with which they read various kinds of materials and to monitor their speed so the comprehension does not suffer. Students and teachers work together to determine the appropriate fluency and comprehension goals.

Cooperative Strategies

In order to more actively engage students in the learning process, cooperative strategies are used frequently in the Second Chance program.

- **Pair Share** A structure that enables students to share with their peers elements of the books they are reading independently.
- **Round Table** A simple cooperative comprehension exercise in which partners recall information about selections the teacher reads orally to the class is the whole.
- **Vocabulary Pairs** A cooperative activity for partners in which students rehearse/learn vocabulary words from their individual vocabulary files.

Weekly Structure

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<p>Independent Reading* (15-20 minutes)</p> <p>Pair Share* with generic questions (5-10 minutes)</p> <p>Vocabulary for Read Aloud (15-20 minutes)</p>	<p>Think Aloud (model comprehension strategies and ask questions of pairs) – (15-25 minutes)</p> <p>Comprehension Activity (Coop Comprehension, Dictated Writing or Inductive Thinking, etc.) – (20-35 minutes)</p>	<p>Independent Reading* (15-20 minutes)</p> <p>Pair Share* with generic questions (5-10 minutes)</p> <p>Reading Skill Lesson (context clues, fluency drills, etc.) – (20 minutes)</p>	<p>Independent Reading* (15-20 minutes)</p> <p>Individual Vocabulary Cards* (10-15 minutes)</p> <p>Vocabulary Pairs* (10-15 minutes)</p>	<p>Independent Reading* (15-20 minutes)</p> <p>Vocabulary Pairs*</p> <p>Vocabulary tests</p> <p>[Bi-weekly fluency tests]</p>

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Research Base

Two types of research are referenced below in support of the SCR program. The first body of work is the study of specific strategies aimed at improving comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency -- the elements that are combined to form a comprehensive reading program for secondary students. The second body of work is the collection of effects resulting from implementation of the SCR program, in which elements are combined in a specific pattern and structure.

While some of the studies of individual strategies meet the criteria set forth in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, none of the program evaluations meet these criteria. At present, there are no secondary reading programs which meet the NCLB criteria, e.g., random assignment of students and/or teachers to treatment conditions. The strength of SCR lies in its replications in multiple settings with various student populations.

SCR also incorporates many of the suggestions advocated by reading experts (see Balfanz, et al., 2002; Biancarosa and Snow, 2004; and Moore, et al., 1999) as well as by experts in adolescent psychology.

Research on Specific Instructional Strategies

Comprehension Instruction

In SCR, the strategies used most frequently for comprehension are Read Alouds, Think Alouds, Inductive Thinking, Writing and Graphic Organizers. What are frequently categorized as “Questioning Strategies” (e.g., Reciprocal Teaching, PQ4R, etc.), in which students are asked to work with peers to summarize passages, infer, predict, and synthesize are incorporated into other SCR strategies and do not occur as a separate strategy.

Support for the modeling of comprehension strategies during read aloud and think aloud activities can be found in the work of Brett et al., 1996, Bauman, et al., 1992, Carr et al, 1983, Dole et al., 1991, Pressley, 2000, and Shaw, 2002. In addition, the efficacy of strategy instruction and questioning strategies, so often incorporated into the think aloud process, is well established (see studies by Alfassi, 1998, Lysynchuk et al, 1990, Rosenshine and Meister, 1994. Kucan and Beck, 1997, in a meta-analysis of research on Read Aloud and Think Aloud strategies, build a persuasive case for their use in the teaching of comprehension strategies. Furthermore, they note the importance of social context (cooperative structures) and suggest that this variable is so important it may be impossible to determine the strengths of various comprehension strategies alone (e.g., questioning strategies, Reciprocal Teaching) because of the powerful contribution of cooperative structures.

Inductive Thinking has a long research history in math and science applications. Its application to higher-order comprehension tasks is more recent. Because it relies on students’ abilities to compare and contrast, categorize similar ideas, and form generalizations, it is especially useful for identifying an author’s primary message and for evaluating complex passages. A valuable side effect is the ease of writing summaries and essays on textual materials first developed with inductive thinking. Research supporting inductive thinking includes Flick (1992), Newby et al. (1995) and Ross (1987).

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Graphic organizers come in many varieties and vary considerably in their effectiveness for increasing comprehension. SCR uses a narrow range of organizers—those that are teacher-made and impose a conceptual framework on the material to be comprehended. We frequently combine the work of Pressley and Levin on link-word mnemonics with other forms of organizers in order to add a pictorial element to the graphic. Research supporting these types of graphic organizers for reading comprehension includes Darch et al. (1986) [although this treatment was confounded with cooperative groups], Denner (1986) [semantic maps], Levin et al. (1983) [illustrated keyword mnemonics], and Pressley et al. (1981).

Vocabulary Development

For secondary students, research supports vocabulary instruction that mixes definitional and contextual methods (Kolich, 1991. Stahl and Fairbanks, 1986), mnemonic keyword methods that stress the building of associations between prior knowledge and new words (Levin et al., 1992) and multiple opportunities to practice using new words (McKeown et al., 1985). McKeown has even suggested that increasing the amount of independent reading may be a sufficient treatment for vocabulary development for many students.

Fluency Practice

Many studies support the efficacy of fluency treatments although many were conducted with elementary students. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) studies routinely find a high correlation among comprehension, fluency and vocabulary, although causal links have not been established. Rasinski and Hoffman (2003) and Young et al. (1996) both report strong evidence for repeated reading, assisted reading and choral reading. Eldredge et al. (1996) and Holdaway (1979, 1981) report evidence in support of shared book experience, and Martinez et al. (1999) found support for Readers Theater with young children, although they noted the practice was wide-spread with early adolescent readers.

In SCR we have experimented with all these strategies in an effort to target reading fluency. Our greatest success is with Readers Theater, in which adolescent readers appear more willing to engage. The structure we have designed for Readers Theater includes multiple rehearsals (thus the repeated readings) and cooperative groupings.

Cooperative Learning

The research supporting cooperative learning is extensive. A meta-analysis of research on cooperative learning (Rolheiser-Bennett, 1986) found an effect size of .3 for simple strategies on standardized tests and .5 on criterion-referenced tests. More complex cooperative learning strategies often achieved effect sizes greater than 1.0. Alfassi (1998) and Fuchs et al. (1999) all note the power of cooperative learning for reading comprehension. As mentioned earlier, Kucan and Beck (1997) find the contribution of cooperative learning (which they label “social context”) so powerful for comprehension that they suggest it may be the major contributor to positive effects for many of the more powerful comprehension strategies.